

WITH COMPLIMENTS OF
R. B. HANSON

ADDRESS

OF THE

Hon. R. B. Hanson, K.C., M.P.

Delivered at the

NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE CONVENTION

IN WINNIPEG

ON

DECEMBER 9TH, 1942

Address of the Honourable R. B. Hanson

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of the Conservative Party:

May I be permitted to add my brief word of welcome to all the friends and adherents of the Conservative Party who have gathered here today in this City of Winnipeg, in the very heart of Canada, to make plans and lay down principles for the future of this Party as an instrument and agency for the development and government of our beloved Canada.

An Historic Occasion for an Historic Party

This is an historic occasion. This party which we love and to which we adhere is an historic party. It has to its credit a great sum total of achievement in forming and building up a nation on the northern half of this hemisphere. Of that accomplishment we may all be justly proud, and justly proud we are. The achievement of Confederation, the uniting of the scattered Provinces into a strong and virile nation under the British flag and within the ambit of the British Empire, the emergence of this Dominion into a nation as a result of our contribution to World War No. 1, are but small parts of the labour and accomplishment of this party.

And because of its accomplishments of the past and its great contributions to the National life, this party has a part and a magnificent part to play in the future development and history of Canada. And play that part it will if the purpose of this great gathering of earnest, sincere and patriotic Canadians means anything. And I am sure it does mean many things.

Keep Faith with the Past—Reconstruct for the Future

We are not here merely to do homage to past achievements. We are here in part determined to keep faith with the past, but not to worship the past. We as Conservatives, if we are worthy of that name and what it implies, are here determined today and in the future to do our share as a loyal organization of men and women to build a greater Canada, based on the best of the experiences of the past, coupled with the will to serve the people of this country in the future, as we have in the past, so that Canada and the people of Canada, whom we serve, may proceed from one achievement to another and make this country what Providence destined it to be—a great, happy, free and prosperous nation.

This party did not have its birth for the sake of party itself. It had its birth and growth, has justified its existence and will continue to justify its existence on the principle of *service to the State*. On no other hypothesis should a political party exist. On no other hypothesis can it live. And on no other hypothesis should it ask for public support.

A Party of the People

Furthermore and notwithstanding all that has been said by its opponents, this party has been, is now, and I pray God will always be, *a party of the people*, offering open sesame to all classes, creeds and groups of a cosmopolitan people to come within its ranks and join its forces.

Practical and Progressive

In the past it has practised progressive principles to a greater degree than any other school of political thought and in the days that are ahead it must continue to do so if it is to fulfill its mission. Some cynic has said of the Conservative Party that it has been true to false principles, while the Liberal Party has been false to true principles. I deny the truth of both allegations.

The Conservative Party has been true to every principle it has expounded and, taken by and large over the years, those principles have been sane, safe and progressive.

"The King of Isolationists"

The Liberal Party, under the leadership of Mr. King, while professing liberal ideas in Opposition, has never practised any principles in the domestic sphere except those based on Opportunism, and in the realm of international politics its every action has been based on the principle of Isolation—a policy which has resulted in disrupting the unity of this nation at the most critical juncture in its history. It is not for nothing that an able journalist has christened Mr. King "The King of Isolationists".

Fundamental Truths of Conservatism

There are certain fundamental truths that underlie the whole fabric and structure of Canadian Conservatism. These principles are eternal. Upon those principles this Party was founded and built. They helped to make Canada a Nation, and they are the fundamentals upon which the nation must proceed if we are to continue to be a free nation and a free people under a controlled capitalistic system.

The British Partnership

Superimposed upon those principles, supremely urgent because of world conditions, is another principle which is fundamental to us as a Party. Without equivocation, mental or other reservation, this Party insists and will continue to insist upon the utmost support to our Mother Country, Britain, and to the United Nations in winning this gigantic struggle in which as a free people we are today engaged.

Accounting of Stewardship

In May 1940, after the last election, I had the honour of leading this Party in the House of Commons thrust upon me. I took up the burden with grave misgivings, but with full determination not only to preserve the identity of this Party as an instrument of Government, but also to qualify this party to be the servant of the State in the future. How far I succeeded I leave you to judge.

Rededication of Party to Service of State

At the earliest opportunity and with the full support of our membership in the House, *I rededicated this Party to the service of the State*, to the end that this Canada of ours should wage total war with total effort, in any and every theatre of war; in the second place, that we should defend our country by active participation in the conflict overseas; and

thirdly, that we use our utmost endeavors to help solve those domestic problems which confronted the nation.

Attitude of Opposition Towards the Government

We offered Mr. King and his Government our whole hearted support in the National effort, reserving the right of constructive criticism, reserving also our right as elected representatives of the people to be informed of the progress of events. We have never for one moment abrogated that function.

Our first and primary objective was the winning of the war, and winning it in the actual theatres of the conflict. From that objective we have never varied.

But the Government after one or two futile gestures, as for example the offer of two seats in a War Council, without any power, which we rejected for obvious reasons, refused to co-operate, refused to keep us informed, and day by day followed the practice of rule by Order-in-Council—a most iniquitous practice, and a defiance of every principle of representative Government.

Record of Opposition in Parliament

Notwithstanding the criticism which was directed and levelled against us as being a weak and ineffective Opposition, day by day and step by step we drove Mr. King and his Government from a position of comfortable and moderate participation to greater and greater activity. I claim that as a result of the battle we put in the House we got the Mobilization Act, mutilated and hamstrung if you will by Mr. King's policy of appeasement. We were the first to advocate the manufacture of modern instruments of war in Canada. We were the first to advocate a complete system of basic and advanced training for the Army. We were the first to declare for the complete mobilization of the nation with respect to national service.

All these things we advocated during three sessions of Parliament, and we have had the satisfaction of seeing every principle which we advocated accepted in some degree at least by the present administration at Ottawa, but they have not put them into practice.

This Party Government at Ottawa has never led the people of Canada. Always it has followed the lead given by public opinion in the House and in the public press. One major proposal after another was rejected only to be accepted after much needless delay.

The Manpower Problem and National Selective Service

May I refer you in particular to the question of manpower. Those of you who follow the debates in the House of Commons will recall that in the King's speech at the opening of the last session Mr. King promised this country a plebiscite, in lieu of a vigorous and forthright manpower policy. We moved an amendment rejecting this proposal, which was obviously intended to delay consideration of the manpower problem. We advocated a complete all-inclusive system of National

selective service, encompassing the wealth, the material resources, and the manpower of the nation, to the end that the requirements of the armed forces, agriculture and industry should be adequately met and that the total resources of the country be mobilized for total war.

Our proposals were rejected by the Government and, with the support of its servile following, voted down in Parliament. Instead we got the Plebiscite—a grievous affront, a crowning indignity to the loyal people of Canada.

And mark you well, within three months after that rejection the Government adopted the principle of our amendment with one limitation and announced the setting up of National Selective Service with Mr. Little as Director, along the lines of the principles we had advocated.

The Opposition's Contribution to War Policy

I assert with all the power at my command that the advance of this Nation in the direction of total war in the three years just passed was made as the direct result of the policies we have advocated in the House, and in which I am bound to affirm we were magnificently supported by the independent press of this country. If any of you, or if any of the people of this country, are of the opinion that His Majesty's Loyal Opposition in Parliament was not effective in promoting our contribution to the common cause, I would have you examine with care the speech made by Mr. Cardin on the debate on the third reading of the Bill to amend the Mobilization Act, in which he directly charged the Government with having adopted step by step all the proposals made by the Opposition in the direction of total war by total effort. That speech is a complete vindication of our course. It is a complete justification of the policies advocated by us in season and out of season during the three past sessions of Parliament.

True National Leadership Lacking

The real truth with respect to Canada's contribution is that we have not had the leadership from Government so necessary in time of National crisis and emergency. There has been no National leadership. The Government has followed, not led. Its every move has been based on a policy of appeasement to the major element of its support. How different was the leadership of Sir Robert Borden in the last great conflict. There was a man who had the courage to put his political life, and the life of his Government at stake and give the Country leadership!

Party Government Hampers National Unity

And why this failure in National leadership? The answer is abundantly clear. This country has been waging war under a Party Government. And why a Party Government? Because Mr. King desires above everything else to preserve the unity of his party. National unity, about which he has prated so glibly, means to him unity of the Liberal Party and nothing else. And have we national unity today? Never in the whole history of this country were we so disunited, and the reason is because of the very efforts to preserve the unity of the Liberal Party.

Mr. King has practiced a policy of appeasement which has set race against race and class against class.

Twenty-five years of misdirection and maleducation at the hands of Liberal Party leaders! Twenty-five long years in which the leaders of the Liberal Party have failed to instill in all the people of Canada a sense of national obligation, has produced a situation which is unprecedented in the history of this country. Verily Mr. King's chickens have come to roost!

The Will of the Majority Must Prevail

Out of this maelstrom of national disunity emerges one vital principle—the will of the majority must prevail. Democracy has many weaknesses, but there is one fundamental principle which must and shall be respected if we are to survive as a Nation—the will of the majority must prevail.

Failure of Government's Selective Service Policy

Recently the most striking illustration of lack of National leadership has been the failure of the Government's policy of National selective service, heralded as a great national effort by the Prime Minister early this year. Could anything be more disturbing than the charges of obstructionism made by Mr. Little against the Minister of Labour?

But much worse than that, Mr. Little charged directly that there was no national direction, no Government policy, no Government leadership in respect of the whole scheme. His letter to the Minister of Labour is the most damning indictment ever made against this or any Government since the war started. Mr. Little's resignation "is nothing short of an indictment of our National Mobilization for total war and exposes the shocking fact that our so-called manpower crisis is in reality little more than a manpower muddle."

These are not my words. They are the words of a great journal of Eastern Canada which for generations has supported the Liberal Party—The Halifax Chronicle. The manner in which the present Government has handled this question of manpower illustrates the lack of National leadership in the Government and by the Government. It is sufficient in itself to warrant the demand for a complete shake-up in the Administration from the top down.

"We Are Neither Revolutionists Nor Reactionaries"

I have a word to say on the question of policy. We are neither Radicals nor Tories. We are neither revolutionists or reactionaries. We believe in orderly progress. The Radicals in this country today find expression in part through the medium of the Socialist Party. The only Tories I know of in Canada are the men in the high command of the Liberal Party. No greater Tory exists in Canada than Mr. Mackenzie King. He never moves or does anything until forced by public opinion or by the tragedy of events.

The Happy Medium—Progressive Reform

I believe in realism and facing facts. This country believes neither in *revolution or reaction*. This country will support progressive policies and sound principles based on a realization of basic facts and conditions. In our desire to help win the war we have submitted to regimentation, controls and economic planning which in times of peace we would repudiate out of hand. If this country accepts the ideology of either the socialists or the brain trusters, we shall live, move and have our being under more and more controls and regimentation. Regulation and controls will become ends in themselves, and so the Fascist state. Is there not a happy medium? Who is there among us who can with any precision draw a blueprint of post war conditions? Who is there among us who can say there will be a post war period? Certainly there will not be if we do not win this war. There is a happy medium. It lies between Socialism and reaction, and the experiences of the past will in the meantime guide us in avoiding the pitfalls of the future.

The World of Tomorrow Based on Security and Freedom

We are living in an unprecedented period in the world's history. The world of yesterday is past; the world of tomorrow is struggling for birth and life. Who is so bold as to prophesy what the future will be, and that being true what specific concrete plans for the post war period can now be laid down dogmatically. Some things we can visualize clearly. We all desire security, freedom and liberty.

First and Paramount Duty—To Win the War

A clarion call to all to unite this nation to win the war is the first and paramount duty of the hour, and when that is done, turn to the solution of the problems of transition from wartime to peacetime activities in the light of conditions as they then present themselves.

That does not mean that we should not be discussing the future problems of this nation now. Discussion now is all to the good, for out of the welter of discussion and examination will emerge the truth.

Progressive Policies Based on the Four Freedoms Advocated

Our primary problem should be to lay down sound, progressive principles upon which to build specific policies and take action in the days to come. Above all else these principles must be founded and embedded on the principles of freedom and liberty for the individual.

With all my heart I endorse Mr. Roosevelt's four freedoms—freedom from want; freedom from fear; freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of speech and a free press. We all support those fundamentals, but in my view if we are to remain a free people something more is required.

Freedom of Enterprise

To these four freedoms I would add a fifth—*freedom of enterprise*, which buttresses and supports the other four. If we have not freedom of enterprise we have not complete liberty and freedom, and without

these we cease to be a free democratic people. And based on these, and flowing from them, the free people of Canada desire security—security not through the dole but through opportunity—opportunity provided by the dual agencies of private enterprise and intelligent legislation.

The British Connection Fundamental

Second only in importance in my view to the winning of the war is the maintenance of the British connection and our position as a component part of the British Empire. This convention should without question, and without doubt will reaffirm its allegiance to the British Crown and to the British Empire—the freest Commonwealth and the most outstanding and constructive force for the good of mankind the world has ever known. We would not be worthy of our heritage, we would not be worthy of the name we bear, if we did not with united hearts raise our voices in support of this basic principle of this party.

I hope and pray that the deliberations of this Convention will be harmonious. There should be freedom of thought and expression, but in the end we must be a united party, if we are to serve the state and achieve our objective, which in a word is to serve Canada.

The Mission of Conservatism

Some one recently asked the question—Can the Conservative Party come back? The answer comes from a million voices in a thundering affirmative. It can and will come back. For 89 years it has performed a great service to Canada. Its statesmen of both great races built here a nation. The strove here to establish liberty, freedom and prosperity. That task must go on. The Conservative Party has the genius, the ability and the desire to serve Canada. Its mission lies immediately ahead. Win the War! Win the peace! Prepare for the post war period! Make Canada a united and prosperous nation within the ambit of the British Empire! That is the task which lies before us. That is our mission. With sane and enlightened leadership this party will not fail in that mission.